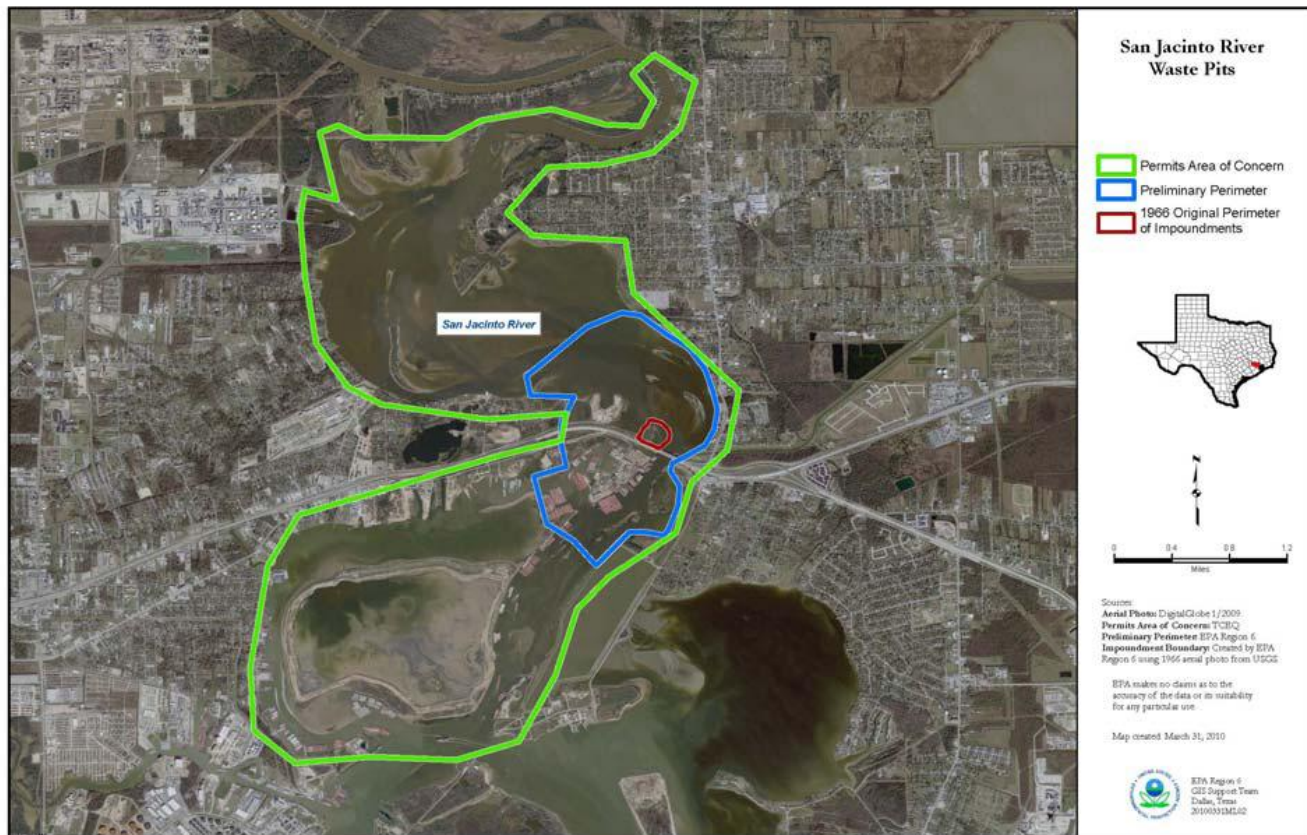


San Jacinto River Waste Pits, Texas

Site Update – June 2012

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Contact: Cynthia Fanning, Congressional Liaison
214-665-2142 or fanning.cynthia@epa.gov



BACKGROUND:

The site consists of impoundments located adjacent to the Interstate Highway 10 (I-10) Bridge and the San Jacinto River and the surrounding areas, containing paper mill waste from the Pasadena Champion Paper Mill. Two impoundments are located north of the I-10 Bridge and are partially submerged in the San Jacinto River on the western side in Harris County, Texas. An additional impoundment is suspected to be located directly south of the I-10 Bridge and is currently being investigated under the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study.

The primary hazardous substances documented at the site are dioxins (polychlorinated dibenzo-p-dioxins and polychlorinated dibenzofurans). Dioxin concentrations as high as 360,000 parts per trillion have been found in sediment samples collected from the submerged portion of the waste disposal ponds, as well as dioxin concentrations as high as 3,660 parts per trillion in sediment samples collected outside the original 1966 waste ponds. A fish consumption advisory based on dioxin is in place on this segment of the watershed.

The site was listed on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) National Priorities List on March 19, 2008. The EPA SJRWP website can be found online at: http://www.epa.gov/region6/6sf/texas/san_jacinto.

STATUS OF CURRENT ACTIVITIES:

I. Community Outreach

EPA participated in a community meeting on June 14, 2012, hosted by the San Jacinto River Coalition and Texans Together to update residents on site developments and schedules. The well-attended meeting held at the Highlands Texas Methodist Church included presentations by EPA on site cleanup work and color-coding, an EPA initiative.

II. Source Stabilization

EPA conducted the second quarterly cap inspection in May 2012. The inspection consisted of reviewing the integrity of the armor cap, site security, fencing, and site signage. No issues of concern were identified during the inspection.

III. Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS)

Analysis and validation of the Southern Impoundment soil, sediment, and groundwater samples collected in early May is continuing with results expected in July. The EPA and partner agencies completed regulatory reviews and comments on the draft Baseline Ecological Risk Assessment and the comments were relayed to the Potentially Responsible Parties (PRPs). Several conference calls regarding the Fate and Transport Model Study were also held with the PRPs. EPA received a revised sediment sampling plan for the River Fleet property located northwest of the waste pits in response to the regulatory comments. Reviews of this revised sampling plan are in progress now. The cap porewater samplers were installed in early June and are expected to be pulled in early July for analysis.

IV. Watershed Management

EPA continues to coordinate with the Port of Houston Authority, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Galveston District and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). TCEQ envisions completing the total maximum daily load for Buffalo Bayou with regard to dioxin/furan by the end of 2012 and will put together a monitoring and implementation plan to reduce levels in Buffalo Bayou to within national background levels.

V. Enforcement

The potentially responsible party group continues to conduct the RI/FS under the Unilateral Administrative Order. Respondents continue to work towards resolving the outstanding issue of stipulated penalties resulting from prior noncompliance with the order.